DL 303 [Bambara Figure]

ORIGINAL NAME: Tyi Wara, Ci’wara (Chi Wara)

CULTURE: Bambara (Bambana) peoples (originally first known as

ORIGIN: Mandé ethnic group in Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso and Senegal (West Africa)

**FEATURES/DESCRIPTION**

* Vertical head
* Elongated face
* Made of wood
* Long horns
* Facial markings

**OVERVIEW**

The spiritual realities and cultural practices of the Bambara people trails from their cosmology and mythology. At the helm of all visible and invisible being is the supreme being and creator of all things, Bemba. Below this supreme being are the divinities and ancestors. The ancestors are mostly either human beings, or a combination of human and divine being, who lived a worthy, noble and exemplary life while on earth. The Bambara peoples believe that upon the earthly death of these good men and women of the community, they naturally transcend to the **ethereal world,** where the become the living dead (Ancestors), residing directly with the creator.

Ancestors are thus, giving a strong veneration, as they grant easy access to the creator. For the people of Bambara, Tyi wara is one of such revered ancestors from the community, whose earthly deeds, inspired a boisterous agricultural atmosphere in the community.

It is believed that Tyi wara was a mythical being, comprising of both divine and human characteristics. Upon descending from the sun goddess and settling in the ancient Bambara kingdom, he started the noble art of farming; going ahead to teach the Bambara people how to till the land and grow food. This occupation expanded their wealth and notability within neighboring communities.

Later on, the Bambara people in honoring this important ancestor formed a spiritual and socio-economic society named after him. Initiates are adepts in the skill of farming, who have also (by their deeds in the community) marked themselves out as noble and righteous men. This society represents their founding ancestor ‘Tyi Wara’ with a sculpted headdress, with the features of an antelope, aardvark, and pangolin.

Each of these animals bear a significant feature of the abilities Tyi wara possessed while on earth.

The antelope represents the speed, endurance and energy of Tyi wara. On headdress the horn of the antelope is shown.

The curved figure of the pangolin with its prominent scales signifies the Tyi wara adeptness in tilling and digging. Pangolins are notable for

While the aardvark possesses a good digging skill, it’s long nose, ears and tongue (as shown on the headdress) is used for catching preys.

Periodically, members of the Tyi wara society perform ritualistic ceremonies in keeping alive the memories and antecedents of Tyi wara. Young male skilled dancers, wear the animalistic headdress over long raffia costume and perform dances. Women also join in the reverie, by singing songs of praise for their undaunting hard work

Till date, the Bambara people still pride themselves in subsistence farming; this being their major and most dedicated occupation.